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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 001647

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [UG](#) [BU](#) [SO](#)  
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESS PLAGUES AMISOM TROOPS

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: An as-yet undiagnosed illness that has resulted in the deaths of three Burundian AMISOM troops appears to have spread to separately-based Ugandan AMISOM troops in Mogadishu, and caused three more deaths. The ill soldiers are being medevaced to Nairobi where doctors, with assistance from CDC staff, are attempting to grapple with the growing problem. End summary.

¶2. (C) The as-yet undiagnosed illness appeared in both Burundian AMISOM camps in Mogadishu about three weeks ago. According to AMISOM contacts, the initial tranche of sick troops was originally thought to have malaria, but their condition worsened after being evacuated to Nairobi for what was expected to be routine treatment. Others in the Burundian camps became sick, and ultimately twenty-one soldiers had to be evacuated. Three of their number died; two of them before they could be transported from Mogadishu. The probable causes of their deaths were varied, and the symptoms manifested by the surviving Burundian troops were various as well and resisted, according to medical doctors involved in the cases, any one diagnosis.

¶3. (C) Ugandan AMISOM troops in Mogadishu began manifesting the same symptoms during the week of July 27. Fourteen Ugandan soldiers have been evacuated to Nairobi; and one of their number has died. Two additional Ugandan troops died before they could be airlifted from Mogadishu.

¶4. (C) During the week of July 20, the Minister of Defense of Burundi sent a medical team to Mogadishu. The team was headed by a Major General, which indicates the seriousness with which the problem is regarded. Two Ugandan military doctors departed for Mogadishu on July 29, and two African Union physicians are also engaged in the case. One of them is attending the patients in Nairobi; the second has been sent to Mogadishu.

¶5. (C) The CDC Nairobi has formed a working group with the Aga Khan (Nairobi) Medical Director, the Burundian medical team, and the AU physicians. (The Ugandan physicians will be included in the group, once contact with them is established.) It has also interviewed the patients and is performing laboratory tests. (Some of the samples have been sent to the U.S. for analysis.)

¶6. (C) Although no firm diagnosis has been made, it appears to the team of physicians that the illnesses can be traced to sanitary conditions in the camp, and perhaps may be connected to food preparation.

Comment  
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¶7. (C) If the illness continues to spread, and diagnosis

remains elusive, it could negatively effect the morale and battlefield capability of the AMISOM troops, who have been key to the Somalia Transitional Federal Government's continued ability to maintain a foothold in Mogadishu. The AU and the armed forces of Burundi and Uganda are well aware of the negative potential and are making strenuous efforts to provide a diagnosis and treat the affected troops. The Somalia Unit is in frequent contact with AMISOM and AU personnel, as well as with the CDC and the DATTS in Kampala and Bujumbura.

SLUTZ